EPA Apps for the Environment Code-a-thon Toolkit

How developers can collaborate and make
a difference

Contents

1. What is Apps for the Environment
2. What's a code-a-thon and why hold one
3. Preparation and promotion
4. How to find ideas for apps
5. How EPA can help
6. Submissions and recognition
7. Post-Event action

What is Apps for the Environment?

- A contest for developers to combine and deliver environmental data in a new app.
  - Great opportunity to get real experience, pump up your resume, and expand your professional network.
- You have free rein to make apps that:
  - Use EPA data
  - Address one of Administrator Lisa Jackson's Seven Priorities, and
  - Are useful to communities or individuals
- You can use other environmental and health data.
- Winners will be honored at a recognition event in Washington, D.C. this fall and the winning apps will be publicized on EPA's website.
- The deadline for submissions is September 16, 2011

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What's a Code-a-thon, and Why Hold One?

- A code-a-thon is an event where developers collaborate to make apps.
- It could be a class working together on one app, or teams coming together to develop several apps.
- It could range from a half day to two days.
- Hosting a code-a-thon provides students the opportunity to
  - Work together on development teams
  - Make useful apps about the environment or public health
  - Gain recognition for their school

Are There Other Ways to Get Involved?

- Universities can create a mentor partnership with a local app development professional to create an app to submit.

- Classes can assign an Apps for the Environment submission as a student project, or award extra credit for it.

- Hosting a code-a-thon is the most impactful way to participate in Apps for the Environment because it :
  - Allows professional developers to interact with students and teach real-world skills
  - Provides EPA staff who are on call to answer questions about EPA data or environmental issues

What are the Organizer's Responsibilities?

Plan
- Determine if a code-a-thon is the right engagement
- Invite key members for the planning team/partners
- Direct participants to EPA's Data and Developer Forum
- Fundraising (if necessary)
- Promote to attract participants

Execute
- Coordinate the efforts of the code-a-thon participants
- Provide mentorship or skills matchmaking

Follow-up
- Encourage submission of final app(s) to EPA
- Send EPA photos, etc. to recognize on their blog

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What Funding Is Needed to Host a Code-a-thon?

- Funds could be needed for food and refreshments or for renting a room or two.

- Student groups, private companies and other programs can provide funds or services, including:
  - Sponsorship from a local pizza shop for free pizza
  - Endorsement from a student group in order to secure free space on campus for a weekend

- Organizers should approach potential sponsors for the code-a-thon early on, so sponsors themselves can help promote the event

How Can I Promote Our Code-a-thon?

- Create an event page with an RSVP capability, such as provided by Facebook or Eventbrite.

- Distribute the link to your code-a-thon on Twitter, through listservs, or other digital media.

- Distribute fliers and talk to your friends and classmates.

- Promote through local media, including newspapers.

- Work with EPA's regional offices (in 10 US cities).

What Can We Find Ideas for Apps?

- Check out ideas for apps on the EPA Data and Developer Forum http://blog.epa.gov/data/ideasforappscomments/

- Development teams can ask people in their local community what apps they need.

- See a list of existing apps that use EPA data http://epa.gov/developer/existingapps.html

How can EPA help?

- Answer your questions about data and the environment so you understand its context
- Find data and environmental experts
- Be available during the code-a-thon
- Connect you with other developers in your area
- View EPA's available data sets http://www.epa.gov/developer/datasets.html
- View EPA's available data services http://epa.gov/developer/services.html

How Do We Get Equipment for the Event?

- Reserve the room(s) and make sure it's unlocked for the day of your code-a-thon.

- Make sure the room(s) is equipped with adequate WiFi or Ethernet, and that you have the contact information for Technical Staff to assist you if there is a connectivity interruption.

- Other equipment you could provide (participants usually bring their own laptops):
  - Flipcharts and/or whiteboards
  - Pens, pencils or markers for flipcharts or white-boards
  - Projector for viewing data as a group
  - Digital or video camera to capture the event and promote it later

How Do We Get Our Apps and Code-a-thon Seen?

- Submit the final app(s) to appsfortheenvironment.challenge.gov when completed by the SEPT. 16, 2011 deadline.

- Send the EPA photos, video and information from your code-a-thon for congratulatory thanks from the Agency, as well as possible recognition on the EPA website, to mcmahon.ethan (at) epamail.epa.gov.

- Distribute photos, video and information from your code-a-thon on social media.

- Invite local newspaper, radio, television and bloggers to the event for better chances of coverage.

What do we do after our Code-a-thon?

- Your team has until SEPT. 16, 2011 to submit your apps, so development can continue after your code-a-thon until then.

- Stay engaged on the EPA Data and Developer Forum, as other developers still need you to share your ideas, provide insight on how you hosted your code-a-thon, and be part of the EPA developer community!

- Promote your app.

- Vote for your favorite app in the challenge!

How Can I Find Out More?

- Visit www.epa.gov/appsfortheenvironment for more information.
  - Rules are at www.appsfortheenvironment.challenge.gov

- Contact Ethan McMahon at McMahon.Ethan (at) epa (dot) gov to discuss how you can host a code-a-thon, and when available, schedule a discussion with an EPA data specialist for your participants.

- Track the online discussion of Apps for the Environment on the #GreenApps hashtag on Twitter.